



Clean up your own mess

Group picks up trash left in San Marcos River

By Cassandra Tamez
Life and Arts Contributor

Zach Halfin and Derrick Lee, Texas State alumni, began the Eyes of the San Marcos River, an environmental group aimed at preserving the San Marcos River. A decade later, the group grew into a grassroots organization whose river clean-up efforts reinforce city-wide protection of the focal point of San Marcos.

SEE CONSERVATION PAGE 9



Volunteer Mary O'Hara separates trash, Sunday, July 7, 2024, at Rio Vista Park.



Crushed can left in the grass, Thursday, July 4, 2024, at Sewell Park.

By Lesdy Hernandez
News Reporter

The amount of litter has not decreased since the inception of the single-use container ban in San Marcos, according to several conservation groups in the community.

The Reuse at the River Ordinance, otherwise known as the can ban, went into effect on May 1 prohibiting glass or single-use beverage containers in designated areas around the San Marcos River and parks.

According to San Marcos' website, only reusable drinking containers are permitted along the river banks and in certain "No Zone" areas, among those is the San Marcos River and parts of City Park. Signs marking the designated "No Zones" and "Go Zones" are set up around the river and city parks to alert patrons of the rules.

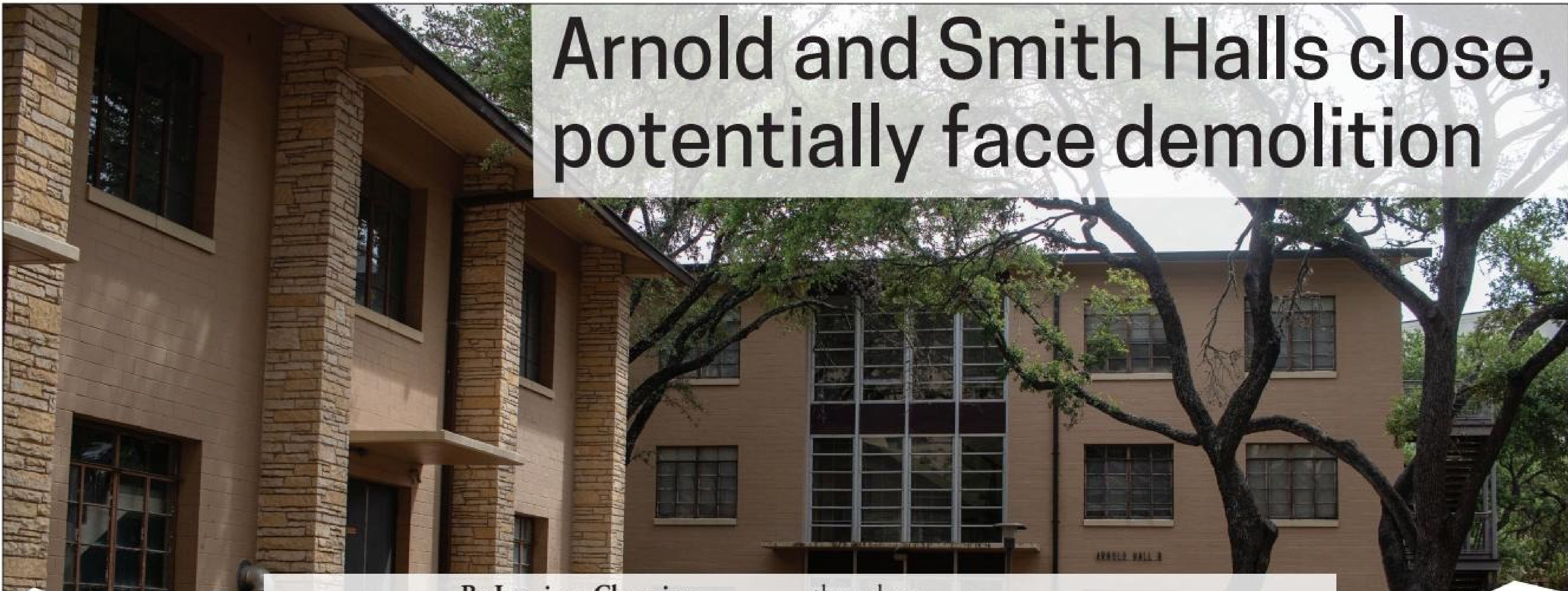
Also under the can ban, there is a size restriction on ice coolers to 30 quarts per person on designated river and park areas.

Christina Lopez, grant coordinator of The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment and co-founder of the River Education and Stewardship Alliance said since it has only been two months that the ordinance is in effect, it is not shocking they haven't seen any decrease of litter in the river.

"There actually has been a pop-up volunteer effort that goes out down to Rio Vista Monday mornings at 6:30 a.m. to help the park crews clean because there's just so much trash left along the banks in Rio Vista," Lopez said.

The group Lopez is referring to is The Eyes of the San Marcos River, a nonprofit organization that organizes river cleanup events and raise awareness on the litter issue around the river.

SEE ENVIRONMENT PAGE 3



By Lucciana Choueiry
News Editor

Editor's Note: The former Smith Hall Resident Assistant quoted in the story has requested to stay anonymous as they plan to still work for the Department of Housing and Residential Life and do not want to risk losing their job.

Arnold Hall and Smith Hall, two residence halls that have housed Bobcats since the 1960s, sit in the outskirts of the LBJ Student Center. Now, their storied histories will come to a close as the Department of Housing Residential Life (DHRL) have shut

them down.

Beginning fall 2024, Arnold and Smith Halls will no longer house freshmen. The reason for the closures is rooted in preserving "the university's flexibility moving forward," according to Executive Director of DHRL Bill Mattera in a written interview with *The University Star*.

"TXST is carefully considering its next steps related to housing growth. With the opening of Alamito and Cibolo Halls this fall, we have made the decision to assign no residents to Arnold or Smith Halls for the fall 2024 semester," Mattera wrote.

Arnold Hall sits abandoned, Monday, July 8, 2024, on campus.

SEE HOUSING PAGE 3

Paris Bound: Badal set to compete at 2024 Olympics

By Jacob De Luna
Sports Reporter

Texas State sophomore sprinter Taejha Badal is set to compete for her home nation of Trinidad and Tobago in the women's 4x100 relay event at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

The relay team, consisting of Badal, Leah Bertrand, Reese Webster and Reyare Thomas, qualified for the Olympics on May 5 at the IAAF World Relays.

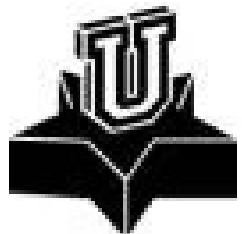
Badal said when the possibility of making the Olympics arose, she was thrilled.

"It was amazing, the first time I realized I had a shot was when I made it to World Relays [in the NACAC U23 Championships] the year before coming to Texas State," Badal said. "I was an alternate and ended up placing fifth in the country. I realized I was a part of the pool."

SEE TRACK & FIELD PAGE 5



Texas State sophomore sprinter Taejha Badal prepares to run off the line at the NCAA Outdoor Championships, Saturday, June 8, 2024, at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon.



Hays County, CISD combat ongoing fentanyl crisis

By Lucciana Choueiry
News Editor

While the Hays County Sheriff's Office has witnessed a decrease in fentanyl poisonings since 2022, a new wave of drugs is making its way to the county.

The Center for Disease and Control Prevention (CDC) defines fentanyl as a "synthetic opioid up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine." Janel Rodriguez defines fentanyl as the drug that poisoned and killed her son Noah Rodriguez as he was heading into his sophomore year at a high school in Buda in August 2022.

"We keep Noah's memory alive by the work that we do with Forever15; going to schools and sharing his story and who he was because he didn't always make the right choices, but letting kids know that there is help out there if they're struggling," Rodriguez said.

Hays Consolidated Independent School District (CISD) lost six kids to fentanyl poisoning in the 2022-23 school year. That number has been reduced to one student death last school year. All Hays CISD deaths have been caused by kids taking counterfeit pills they didn't know were poisoned by fentanyl, Hays County Sheriff's Office Deputy Anthony Hipolito said.

Hays County started with 37 fentanyl poisonings in 2022 and six so far in 2024. Out of the 37, six people died, and out of the six this

year, four have died.

"We're making a difference but it's never going to go away. We're going to continue to have poisonings in our community but our job is to keep it as close to zero as possible," Hipolito said. "So we're going to work tirelessly to do that; both on the street and educationally."

fentanyl and their drugs so powerful, and they don't care if you live or die," Hipolito said.

Hipolito said Narcan, the over-dose-reversal nasal spray, is at the core of combating the fentanyl crisis. The county's EMS, deputies and firefighters have Narcan on them at all times.

"We found sometimes the fentanyl is so powerful it takes two or three doses of Narcan to bring somebody out and we've had as many as four or five doses required to pull some of the kids out. So we have expanded the stock that we have on each campus," Savoy said.

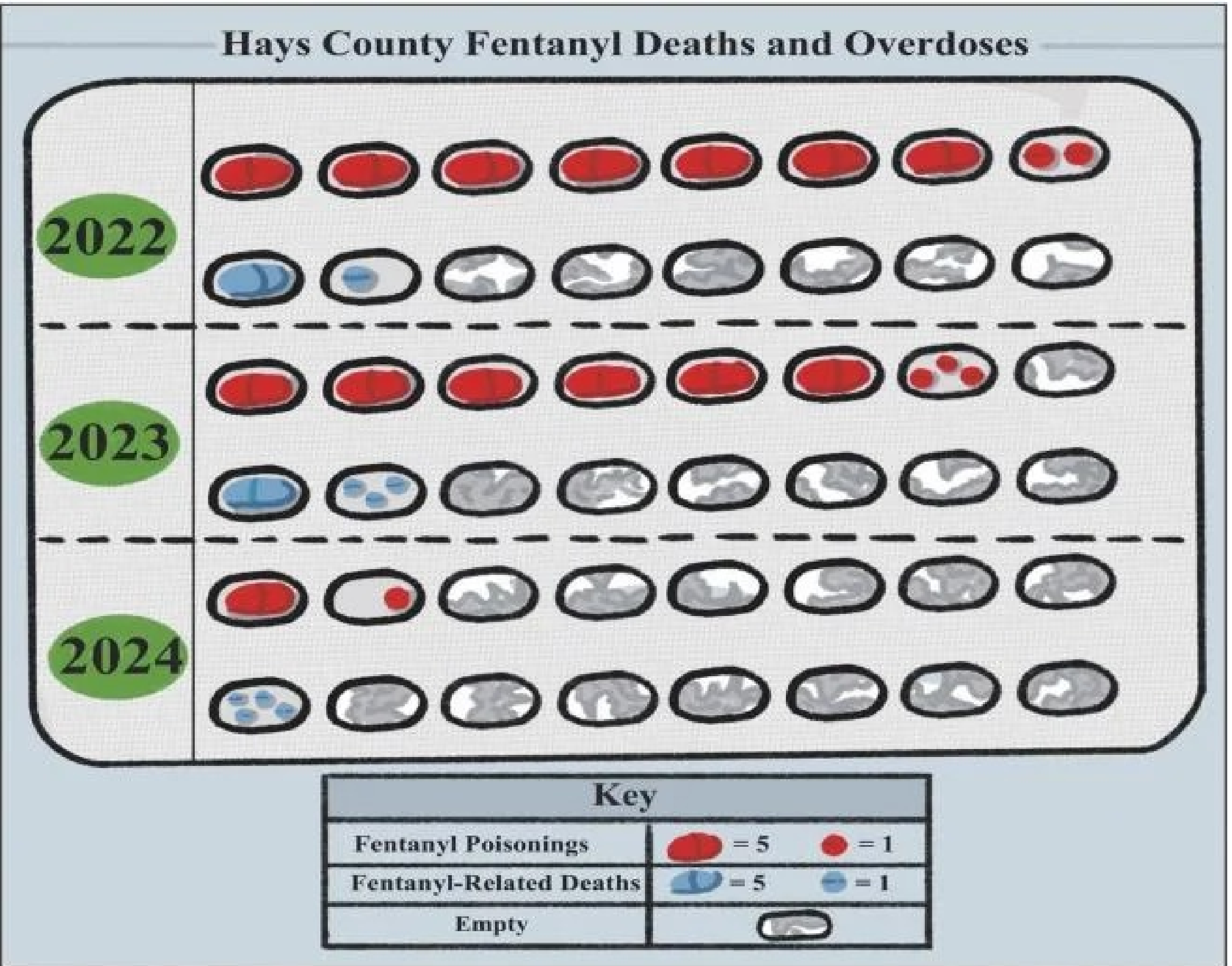
Hays CISD launched a comprehensive fentanyl awareness campaign in response to the 2022-23 surge in fentanyl-related deaths. Specifically because Savoy said four out of the six student deaths took place back-to-back into summer 2022.

But Savoy also said the work is never done.

"No poster or bumper sticker or graphic we can put on social media is going to make somebody say, 'oh, you know what, I think I'm gonna stop.' If you're in a full blown addiction, then you need some intensive treatment help, and that's been the challenge," Savoy said.

Rodriguez said few treatment facilities in Hays County offer help to teenagers – the only one she knows of is Cenikor and its Buda location only constitutes out-patient care. So she developed relationships with rehabilitation centers in San Antonio and Houston to refer kids to.

"We're not going to save everybody. I'm not okay with it, but I know we're not," Hipolito said. "But if we can save one person, I can sleep well at night knowing what we're doing educationally is making a difference."



INFOGRAPHIC BY JARELL CARR

A new wave of counterfeit drugs is approaching the county. According to Hipolito, those include subsets of fentanyl like carfentanil, as well as more dangerous drugs like the animal tranquilizer xylazine.

"[The cartel] is coming up with so many different ways to make their

Narcan also plays a role in helping Hays CISD save students' lives, according to the school district's Chief Communications Officer Tim Savoy. In the 2022-23 school year, there were 11 on-campus Narcan administrations. This past school year, there were three on-campus administrations.

TXST changes free speech policy for antisemitism

By Ryan Claycamp
Senior News Reporter

Texas State has updated its free speech policies to comply with Gov. Greg Abbott's March 27 order on antisemitism on college campuses.

Executive Order (EO) GA-44 requires Texas public universities to adopt the state of Texas' legal definition of antisemitism into their free speech policies and to "establish appropriate punishments, including expulsion from the institution," for students violating the new policy.

Texas State's new policy defines antisemitism as "a certain perception of Jews that may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. The term includes rhetorical and physical acts of antisemitism directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals or their property or toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

The university did not send out a notice to students before updating the free speech policy. Texas State's Young Democratic Socialists of America's (YDSA) leadership said not announcing the update is a way to stifle student protests and organization for pro-Palestinian causes.

"If it was to really help Jewish students feel safer, you would think that they would have done initiatives like 'hey guys we're doing something,' but they're not, which tell us that this is not [in good faith]," Marco Pena, the YDSA's head of political education said.

According to Mike Wintemute, vice chancellor for marketing and communications for the Texas State University System, the changes to the free speech policy will not result in punishment for any speech or actions done before the policy was updated.

Wintemute was unable to give examples of possible punishments, citing that each case will

have unique variables that determine if the incident results in no discipline, a warning or other consequences.

"These are complex issues when you [talk about] the First Amendment," Wintemute said. "For each example there would be specific circumstances that I don't want to speculate on."

YDSA leadership expressed concern over potential punishments being on a case-by-case basis.

"It feels like we are treading a fine line," Kristan Beluso, the YDSA secretary said. "That discretion gives us more freedom, but the university could just take [disciplinary action] from zero to 100."

Chabad at Texas State's Rabbi Ari Weingarten said he supports the order and believes it will protect the students in his organization.

"This will allow students and the Jewish Bobcats to feel safe on campus and to pursue their studies and their careers without disruption. The governor is ensuring a successful higher [education] experience for the Jewish," Weingarten said in a previous interview with *The Star*.

According to leadership at the YDSA, they would challenge any disciplinary action received by their members for any future protests, or other actions they take.

"I don't think this order is going to limit any action on our part; we will definitely keep it in mind," Joseph Nativi, propaganda chair for the YDSA said.

According to Amy Sanders, UT Austin associate professor and licensed attorney, hate speech is protected by the First Amendment.

"The U.S. has a long history of the Supreme Court, through decisions, protecting hateful and offensive speech, even if it is targeted at specific groups of people," Sanders said.

Sanders said universities must enforce their free speech policies fairly across all groups. She said she

thinks Abbott did not write his order with neutral enforcement in mind.

"Constitutionally, I think the problem with Governor Abbott's executive order is that it's perhaps mandating that universities engage in behaviors that are perhaps unconstitutional," Sanders said. "I think this order is clearly a political game. It's designed to send a message."

Scan the QR code to view TXST's new free speech policy.



Allen Dominguez, co-chair of YDSA, and other Texas State students gather to deliver a letter to President Kelly Dampousse against Executive Order 44 on Wednesday, May 8, 2024.

THE UNIVERSITY STAR

DEFENDING THE FIRST AMENDMENT SINCE 1911

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FROM FRONT ENVIRONMENT

David Zambrano, education and outreach coordinator for The Eyes of the San Marcos River said after Memorial Day and Independence Day weekend, the trash they picked up by the river went beyond beverage containers.

“It’s heartbreaking and obnoxious that people feel it’s more like a theme park and not a natural resource,” Zambrano said. “It wasn’t just cans and bottles, people were leaving behind clothing, footwear and food.”

Christie Murillo, marketing and outreach coordinator for the San Marcos Parks and Recreation Department said litter has always been an issue with more disposable beverage containers found each year. Reuse at the River is an effort to reduce that.

Rodney Gonzales, San Marcos assistant city manager, said during the ban’s first year enforcement will not be “heavy handed,” however citizens who fail to comply with the ban could be evicted from the “No Zone” they littered in.

“We are serious about the rules and so we’ve had that [eviction] happen from time to time,” Gonzales said.

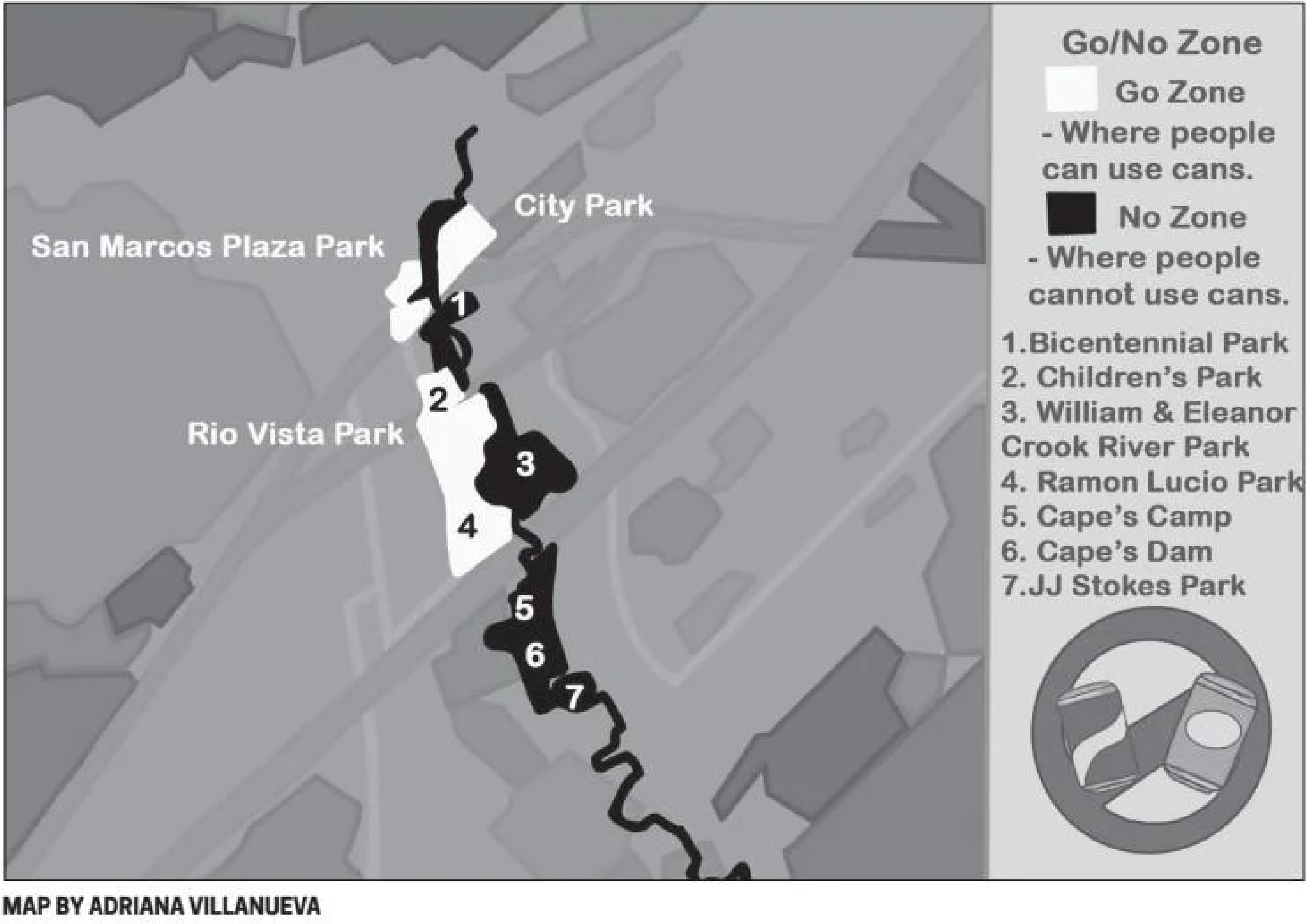
“We want folks to understand as soon as they know that they’re in violation of the rule and that they gain immediate compliance.”

According to the ordinance, violation of the can ban is punishable with fines up to \$500. While Gonzales said the city is currently focusing on educating residents, they aren’t immune to fines.

Murillo said although it is difficult to estimate the amount of litter collected around the river, between May 17, 2023 and Sept. 12, 2023 litter boats carried between 900 to 1,600 cubic feet of trash.

“Last summer, our conservation crew who facilitates the moving of the trash and disposing of the trash from the litter boats were just constantly in the water removing the trash and coming back doing it over again,” Murillo said.

Virginia Parker, executive director of the San Marcos River Foundation,



“There’s a reason that people want to come to this river, it’s beautiful, it’s clean, it’s just a magical place to be and if we don’t treat the river with respect with regards to litter, that’s not going to be the case,”

Virginia Parker
Executive director of the San Marcos River Foundation

said the ordinance is a great first step in the right direction to combat the litter issue, but stressed the importance of improving enforcement and education.

“There’s a reason that people want to come to this river, it’s beautiful, it’s clean, it’s just a magical place to be and if we don’t treat the river with respect with regards to litter, that’s not going to be the case,” Parker said.

Lopez said with the ordinance now in effect there is hope to streamline the rules to include Texas State in order to improve the overall quality of the river for everyone.

“If we can streamline the rules and the policies throughout the San Marcos River corridor that will make the biggest impact because the rules will apply everywhere it will really reduce confusion and then hopefully we will see some changes,” Lopez said.

FROM FRONT HOUSING

Mattera said Alamito and Cibolo Halls, otherwise known as Hilltop Housing, will bring sufficient housing in the fall for all first-year students to live on campus.

In previous years, such as the 2022-23 school year, overpopulation took over Texas State’s resident halls forcing freshmen to live in hotels around San Marcos. However, Alamito and Cibolo are expected to bring in 1,006 new beds and close the on-campus housing gap. Arnold and Smith brought in a collective 273 beds.

“The Hilltop Project has included a second phase of housing to be placed on the site of Arnold and Smith Halls since it was adopted years ago,” Mattera wrote.

Due to the second phase of the Hilltop Housing project, Mattera said DHRL is considering demolishing Arnold Hall and Smith Hall.

But for one former Resident Assistant (RA) at Smith Hall, news of the dorms’ impending demolition came as a shock. He said the RAs were initially told they had another year at the dorms before demolition.

It wasn’t until May 8 when another RA put in maintenance requests and received a response from maintenance saying “these items will go down with the ship,” they realized spring 2024 was the last

semester for the resident halls. On May 9, DHRL staff gathered the RAs for an in-person meeting and told them then, according to Mattera.

“There were 12 returning RAs who were reassigned to those dorms [for fall 2024] in February, so when we found out everyone was confused and freaking out,” the RA said. “It felt like they wouldn’t have told us if we didn’t find out.”

The 12 RAs have now been reassigned to new dorms for the 2024-25 school year, the RA said.

Resident Director (RD) of Arnold and Smith Halls Dominique Peel, who falls under the scope of full-time staff, said his director and supervisor told him of the dorms shutting down in a May 8 meeting. He was told he would be reassigned to a new resident hall.

“It’s pretty sad because I planned on coming back at that time for another year, and the burden is having to move out of my apartment because I live here,” Peel said.

Peel also said DHRL told him the reason for the closures was that Texas State would save \$40 million in construction costs and “things of that nature.”

“I was told the university was saving money and it would just be easier to knock the building down since it had some structural damage to it already,” Peel said.

Now, Peel has decided to leave Texas State and his job as an RD.

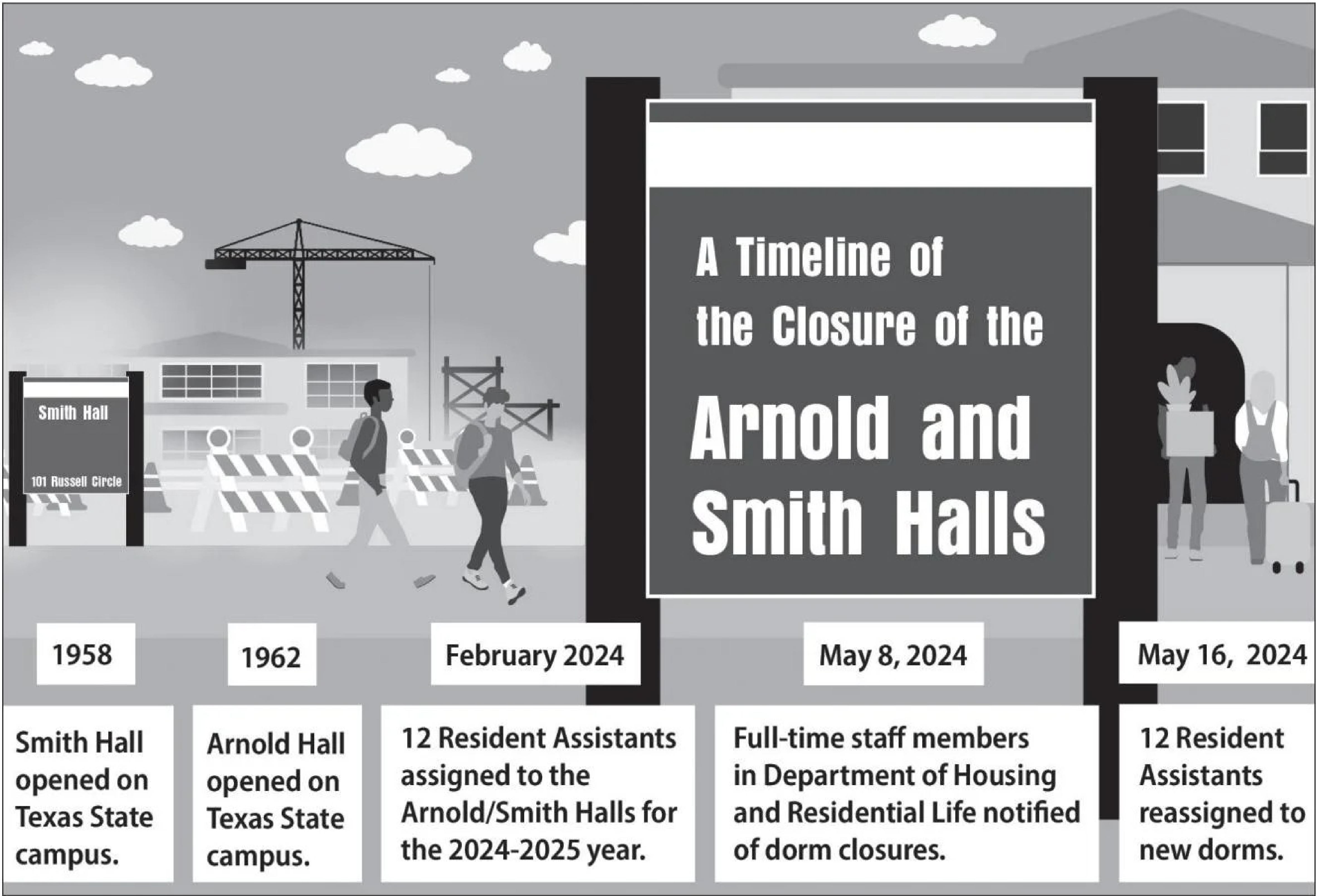
Mattera said Arnold Hall was constructed and opened on Russell Circle in 1962, and Smith Hall was constructed and opened also on Russell Circle in 1958, making it currently the oldest resident hall on campus.

Gaspar Apolinar, a music performance sophomore, lived in Smith Hall during the 2023-24 school year. He said it doesn’t come as a shock that Smith is the oldest resident hall as that was sometimes reflected in the conditions.

“We had no water for a week. We had a water fountain in the lobby that would break constantly. Washing machines would go out of order,” Apolinar said. “I remember hearing maintenance people complain about having to repair something at Smith all the time.”

As staff cleaned and closed up Arnold and Smith Halls for the final time in May, the RA said it was sad to let go of the community they built there.

“It wasn’t about how beautiful the dorms are, it was about the community and the staff members, and all of the returners were really excited to work with each other again,” the RA said.



TIMELINE BY MELANIE CAMARA



Opinions in The University Star are not necessarily those of our entire publication, Texas State University's administration, Board of Regents, School of Journalism and Mass Communication or Student Publications Board.

Texas State needs a culinary arts department

By Adriana Villanueva
Opinions Contributor

Texas State boasts a rich list of brilliant academic programs, but one missing ingredient is a culinary arts major.

A culinary arts department at Texas State would help many aspiring chefs find success. Students would gain a strong foundation in culinary techniques, food science and kitchen management, preparing them for rewarding careers in restaurants, hotels or even their own food businesses.

Adding a culinary arts program wouldn't just diversify the school's curriculum; it would ignite a wave of benefits for both students and the university, from attracting food enthusiast students and unlocking lucrative career opportunities to strengthening community ties.

A culinary arts program at Texas State would attract an entirely new wave of students passionate about food and creativity.

Several Texas colleges offer culinary degrees, including Texas Women's University, Alvin Community College and St. Phillips College, providing comprehensive education and training for aspiring chefs.

St. Phillips College in San Antonio is renowned for its culinary arts program. Students at St. Phillips



ILLUSTRATION BY ADRIANA VILLANUEVA

gain expertise in various culinary techniques, kitchen management and hospitality principles, preparing them for successful careers in the culinary industry.

These established culinary arts programs could serve as valuable models as Texas State does not currently offer a culinary arts major. Once established, a culinary department at Texas State could also benefit from partnering with established programs such as the ones at St. Phillips.

This influx would enrich campus life and generate additional opportunities for foodie-focused events and workshops, giving students the first step into the culinary industry.

The culinary industry provides millions of jobs nationwide. According to the National Restaurant Association, in 2020, there were 15.1 million restaurant employees in the U.S., with 10% of the overall U.S. workforce in the restaurant industry. A culinary arts major would equip students with a degree to find success in this lucrative field.

With that in mind, Texas State has the potential to offer an esteemed culinary arts major, and there are already a few minors that could complement the major itself.

Minors in business administration, recreation studies and nutrition could complement a culinary arts major and foster collaboration between depart-

ments, leading to innovative projects and research opportunities. The major could also fall under the School of Family & Consumer Science, as the school offers a nutrition and food science minor.

Texas State's location could also allow culinary arts majors to foster partnerships with local businesses.

Restaurants could benefit from a pool of well-trained interns while students gain valuable hands-on experience in the food industry. This collaboration would strengthen ties between Texas State and the San Marcos community, creating a win-win for both parties.

The impact wouldn't stop there. A culinary arts major could become a catalyst for the local economy. Graduates could open new restaurants, catering businesses or food trucks, bringing fresh entrepreneurial spirit into the community. This economic ripple effect will benefit San Marcos and the surrounding areas.

Adding a culinary arts major to Texas State is a recipe for success. It will empower students, enrich the community and foster a vibrant food culture in San Marcos.

- Adriana Villanueva is a communication design freshman



ILLUSTRATION BY JARELL CARR

The Texas GOP is too far right for San Marcos

By James Phillips
Opinions Columnist

At the end of its party convention in San Antonio, the Texas Grand Old Party (GOP) released a draft of its official platform on May 25. In the draft, the party stated its beliefs and electoral goals.

The new Texas GOP platform does not properly address the deep problems facing our state, such as the increasing cost of living, skyrocketing summer heat waves from climate change and the controversy caused by Texas' near-complete ban of abortions.

One concerning proposal highlighted in the platform is to have the state legislator directly govern the city of Austin. The proposal would undoubtedly cause many issues for the state and city as a whole. After all, does the Texas GOP seriously suggest a distant legislator is better fit to manage Austin's sewers, electricity, rivers and commercial activity than city management?

However, the Texas GOP does not lay out an actual plan for how they would directly manage Austin or smooth the concerns of the nearly one million residents who would lose their ability to govern themselves directly.

Scan the QR code to continue reading



-James Phillips is an international relations junior

The University Star welcomes Letters to the Editor from its readers. All submissions are reviewed and considered by the Editor in Chief and Opinions Editor for publication. Not all letters are guaranteed for publication.

FDA's approval of menthol e-cigarettes is unacceptable

By Faith Fabian
Assistant Opinions Editor

For the first time, the U.S. Food and Drug Association (FDA) has approved e-cigarettes in a flavor other than tobacco. Four types of menthol-flavored vapes were authorized for marketing on June 21.

Although they are readily available, flavored e-cigarettes are illegal because of their highly addictive quality and adverse health risks. Now, some products with menthol, a flavoring derived from mint, are considered legal under the FDA's approval.

The FDA's approval of certain menthol-flavored e-cigarettes is significant because they will be marketed to young people. According to the Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), historically, tobacco companies add menthol flavoring as a way to make their products "less harsh" and "more appealing" to young people who have not used tobacco products before.

The FDA's decision to further authorize the marketing of e-cigarettes, a product known to have serious health effects, sets a dangerous precedent. If our government agencies are not

going to work against the vaping epidemic that is plaguing young people, who will?

Texas State students are no strangers to vaping. Texas State's no-smoking policy includes e-cigarettes; however, this rule doesn't stop students.

Valerie Rangel, a Texas State psychology alumna, said she believes vaping is extremely common among students, even while on campus.

"In The Quad during rush hours, you can see the puffs of smoke," Rangel said.

Luis Acosta, an international studies graduate student, has a similar perspective on vape use at Texas State.

"I haven't met a single person who hasn't vaped [before]," Acosta said. "I see it [on campus] a lot at night."

There are over 20 smoke and vape shops in San Marcos, not including the various gas stations that also sell vaping products. Many of these shops are on the same street, less than a mile apart.

The use of vapes among students is far too common and accessible, especially when looking at the serious health effects they pose. According to the CDC, nicotine found in vaping products can hinder brain development for those 25 years and younger. In addition, e-cigarettes contain cancerous chemicals, heavy metals including nickel, tin and lead and other chemicals linked to lung disease.

Citizens and activist groups have long advocated for a ban on menthol-flavored cigarettes because of marketing toward young people, African Americans and LGBTQ+ communities in the U.S. The FDA has also been taking steps toward banning menthol-flavored cigarettes since 2013.

It is no mystery that vapes and e-cigarettes are highly addictive and detrimental to one's health, which is why it is unacceptable for the FDA to approve menthol-flavored e-cigarettes instead of banning them.

Currently, the decision to approve menthol-flavored e-cigarettes is being supported by the FDA on the basis that vaping is still a better alternative to smoking for adults who are trying to quit. However, the authorization of menthol-flavoring in vapes will only entice younger people to pick up the habit, leading to an endless loop of addiction and an endless assurance of money for the vaping industry.

Texas State students must stop letting themselves be victims to a marketing scheme. We must be smarter and choose our health over the short-term satisfaction of vaping.

- Faith Fabian is an English sophomore



ILLUSTRATION BY EVA BOWLER

FROM FRONT TRACK & FIELD



Texas State sophomore sprinter Taejha Badal competes in women's 4x100 relay event at the NCAA Outdoor Championships, Saturday, June 8, 2024, at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon.

Badal said running in the 4x100 relay could give her an opportunity to succeed for not only herself but her country.

"I feel like the relay at my age, with this being my first Olympic experience, sets me up to make the most impact for the country and give me the best experience. I am really excited," Badal said.

According to Badal, the women who competed for Trinidad and Tobago roster spots are familiar with each other, bringing a deep sense of competition.

"Most of us have been on teams together, we were all hanging out at World Relays together and we all know each other," Badal said. "[Trinidad and Tobago] is a small country [so] we keep tabs on each other and know who our competition is."

Badal gave credit to the Texas State track and field program for

her progression since arriving in San Marcos.

"Being at [Texas State] really changed my outlook on track and field," Badal said. "Before coming to Texas State I had all these goals and they felt way less obtainable. I was young and I didn't have the training or the coaching I needed."

Texas State assistant track and field coach Trent Edgerton said competing in the Olympics will help Badal obtain knowledge from some of the world's best athletes.

"That is gonna be the best experience that any athlete could gain; the Olympics only come around every four years," Edgerton said. "To go gain that experience and still be able to compete at the collegiate level for a few more years will open her eyes up a lot to her potential and what other things she can accomplish."

According to Edgerton, exposure to the Olympics will show Badal the amount of training required to be an Olympian while offering lessons on how to lead.

Sophomore sprinter and Bobcat teammate Ma'Khi Falkquay said Badal is a strong-willed woman who gives the team positive encouragement.

"Taejha has such a strong spirit, she gets along with everyone and she definitely gives everyone extra energy and confidence," Falkquay said.

Falkquay said experience is not the only thing Badal will bring back from the Olympics.

"Being able to lead us as a team knowing she will have competed at the biggest stage, she will show us the composure we need," Falkquay said. "She will bring back a mentality that you can do anything if you put your mind to it."

Badal is just the ninth track and field athlete in Texas State program history to qualify and compete at the Olympic level.

The women's 4x100 relay team for Trinidad and Tobago is scheduled to compete at the 2024 Paris Olympics on Aug. 8 at the Stade de France Stadium in Saint-Denis, France. The event will be available to watch on NBC and stream on Peacock, NBCOlympics.com, NBC.com and NBC sports apps.

THE START OF THE 2024 VOLLEYBALL SEASON

THE RICE TOURNAMENT

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INFOGRAPHIC BY DJ ROSS


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Maroon & Golden Collective aims to elevate the Bobcat football experience via NIL opportunities

By David Cuevas
Sports Editor

Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) has changed the landscape of collegiate athletics, and while it certainly brings positives and negatives at Texas State, Maroon & Golden NIL Collective LLC is determined to showcase its benefits to collegiate athletes.

Maroon & Golden was established before NIL was in existence by Justin Shaffer, co-founder and board member, as an online forum for Texas State athletics in December 2018. According to Shaffer, Maroon & Golden was created due to a lack of options for fans of Texas State athletics to engage and communicate with each other about athletics, academics, San Marcos and the university.

“There was a void when it came to [the Texas State] fanbase,” Shaffer said. “[Our fanbase] didn’t have an option to go online and talk with other fans outside of Twitter. I got together with some other fans and alumni that I met through Twitter, and we started talking about creating an online forum for the diehard Texas State fans.”

Shaffer said Maroon & Golden quickly got media credentials from the Texas State Athletic Department to cover games, and with the help of fellow board members Richard Lopez and Josh Brenner, they began to grow the platform to its current size.

According to Shaffer, Maroon & Golden migrated to involvement with NIL in July 2022 in the early fundraising stages for the renovation of the south endzone complex at University Federal Credit Union Stadium, raising \$10,875 for the project from its contributors within a week.

“One of our forum members said, ‘Hey, we have all these diehard Texas State fans in one place. How about we get together as a group in a grass-roots effort? We may be able to raise

enough dollars to make an impact into a donation,’” Shaffer said.

Shaffer said the fundraising campaign sparked an idea amongst the Maroon & Golden community to contribute toward NIL.

With the help of former Texas State offensive lineman Thaddeus Watkins, who also serves as a board member, they created the company Maroon & Golden Collective LLC. Watkins’ role is to work with the athletes and handle all things NIL-related.

“I wanted to get involved [with Maroon & Golden] somehow someday [being] a former football player,” Watkins said. “[NIL] is the new landscape of [college] football. It’s important that [Texas State] has resources for the coaching staff first to retain the current roster and bring in talent when needed.”

Watkins said Maroon & Golden Collective’s first board meeting was held on January 3, and they discussed their goals to establish themselves as an NIL collective.

“Our original goal was to sign four to six players, and now we have 26 players signed, and that’s only possible because of all the alumni and donors who have supported us,” Watkins said. “This is the first time in college football history where the fans can actually dictate what [happens] on the field by helping retain the roster.”

According to Watkins, Maroon & Golden Collective’s NIL contracts are structured for athletes to receive financial compensation by creating content only available through their online forum. The athletes also partake in other contracted required deliverables such as meet and greets or dinner with fans.

“We’re a subscription-based collective,” Watkins said. “One of the deliverables in the contracts is the athletes have to do an M&G interview. How that works [is] we ask the forum, ‘What do you want to know about

The names of every Texas State football player currently signed to Maroon & Golden Collective and their respective position from top to bottom.		
Tory Spears safety	Kalil Alexander defensive end	Kenny Haynes linebacker
Ben Bell defensive end	Max Harris linebacker	Brice Bass defensive end
Terry Webb defensive tackle	Chris Mills cornerback	Steven Parker defensive end
Kole Wilson wide receiver	Josh Eaton cornerback	Jordan McCloud quarterback
Joey Hobert wide receiver	Alex Harkey offensive lineman	Deven Wright defensive end
Kaleb Culp safety	Dominique Ratcliff defensive tackle	Treylin Payne linebacker
Nash Jones offensive lineman	A.J. Edwards cornerback	Mannie Nunnery linebacker
Konner Fox tight end	Justin Harris cornerback	Dorion Strawn offensive lineman
Tavian Coleman defensive tackle		

INFOGRAPHIC BY MADELINE CARPENTER

Jordan McCloud? Or what do you want to know about Joey Hobert and Ben Bell?’ So we’re creating something that is more of an intimate setting for the fans to really get to know the players.”

Maroon & Golden Collective currently has 26 Texas State football players signed to NIL contracts, one of which is senior safety Kaleb Culp. Culp said his contract not only helps him financially but sets him up for his future after graduation.

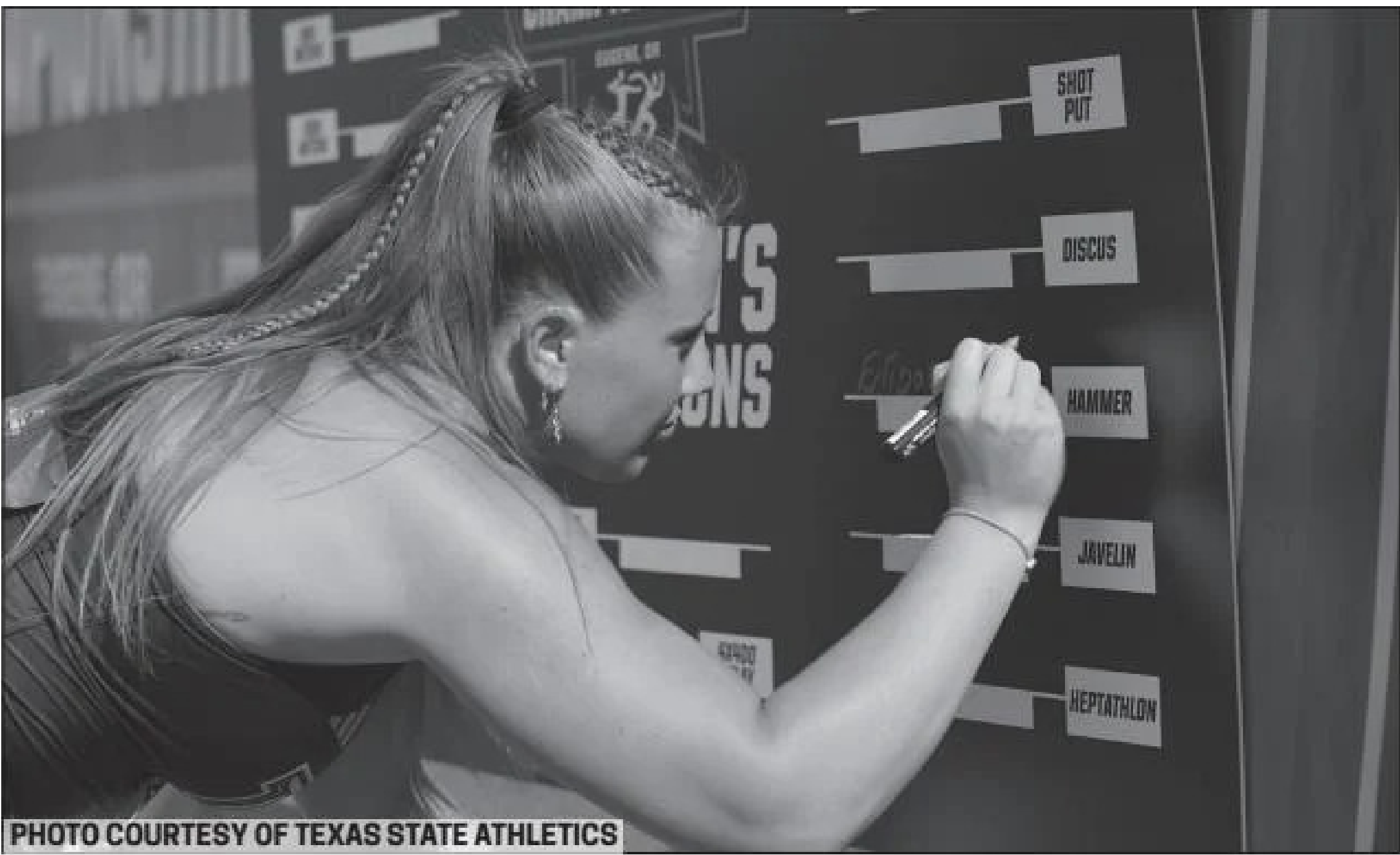
“As a college athlete trying to make ends meet, NIL is a lifeline,” Culp said in a statement after signing his contract with Maroon & Golden Collective. “NIL [allows us] to breathe a bit easier, knowing we can earn a bit of money while still giving our all on the field.”

Watkins said the goal is for Maroon & Golden Collective to sign every player on the Texas State football roster and eventually expand into other sports.

“Right now, our primary focus is football,” Watkins said. “[Football’s] where most money is spent at any major university [regarding] NIL. I would love to get everybody... [signed] because I was a former football player and I know how important every single person on the roster is whether you’re on scholarship or not.”

With the start of the 2024-25 season quickly approaching, Shaffer said Maroon & Golden Collective has many goals they want to accomplish moving forward, the biggest of which is continuing to grow as an NIL collective.

“[Our] primary focus is growth and sustainability,” Shaffer said. “As a collective, I think that’s what is going to have the biggest impact in allowing [Texas State] to have a competitive edge against other [programs] who are looking at how to get into the [NCAA] playoff system.”



Texas State sophomore thrower Elisabet Runarsdottir signs her name on the championship board following her victory at the NCAA Outdoor Championships, Thursday, June 6, 2024, at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon.

Runarsdottir cements historic 2024 campaign

By Jacob De Luna
Sports Reporter

Texas State sophomore thrower Elisabet Runarsdottir performed at a historic level throughout the 2024 season, racking up conference, national and Olympic championships.

Runarsdottir threw a 69.08 meter toss for the Sun Belt women’s hammer throw championship, recorded a 70.47 meter toss to win the NCAA Championship and placed first at the Icelandic U23 Championships.

Runarsdottir said she plans to look back on what routines and strategies worked for her this year and focus on incorporating those practices in her regiment next season.

“The main focus coming out of this season for me is to reflect on what helped me to succeed,” Runarsdottir said. “I want to bring all of those things into next season, and throw out what I feel isn’t the best for me.”

While making her mark in the record books and winning competitions, Runarsdottir also faced adversity. She said she worked through a back injury during the 2023 season.

Runarsdottir said it was challenging to get back to her peak throwing abilities, but the hard work paid off.

“That was tough mentally just trying to work through it,” Runarsdottir said. “Coming into this season I felt good throughout the whole year and built up a lot of confidence.”

The reigning NCAA Champion said the great dynamic between her and track and field director John Frazier helped her in these achievements.

Scan the QR code to read the remainder of the story.



Bobcat football fills roster gaps for 2024-25 season

By Jude Botello
Sports Contributor

After completing an 8-5 record (4-4 Sun Belt Conference) and its first bowl game win, the Texas State football team is set on improving its newfound success.

This offseason saw many Bobcats leave for different schools. Here are their replacements, starting with the offense.

Quarterback Losses: Both the starting quarterback T.J. Finley and backup quarterback Malik Hornsby transferred, leaving the quarterback room without someone who’d tasted starting reps.

Finley started throughout the season and finished with 67.4% completion, 3,439 yards, 24 touchdowns and eight interceptions. He transferred to Western Kentucky in the offseason.

Hornsby acted as the backup quarterback for the 2023 season and transferred to Arkansas State. He finished the season with 53.3% completion, 83 passing yards and one interception with 229 rushing yards and six rushing touchdowns.

Quarterback Additions: The losses of Finley and Hornsby may not sting for long due to the acquisition of former James Madison quarterback Jordan McCloud.

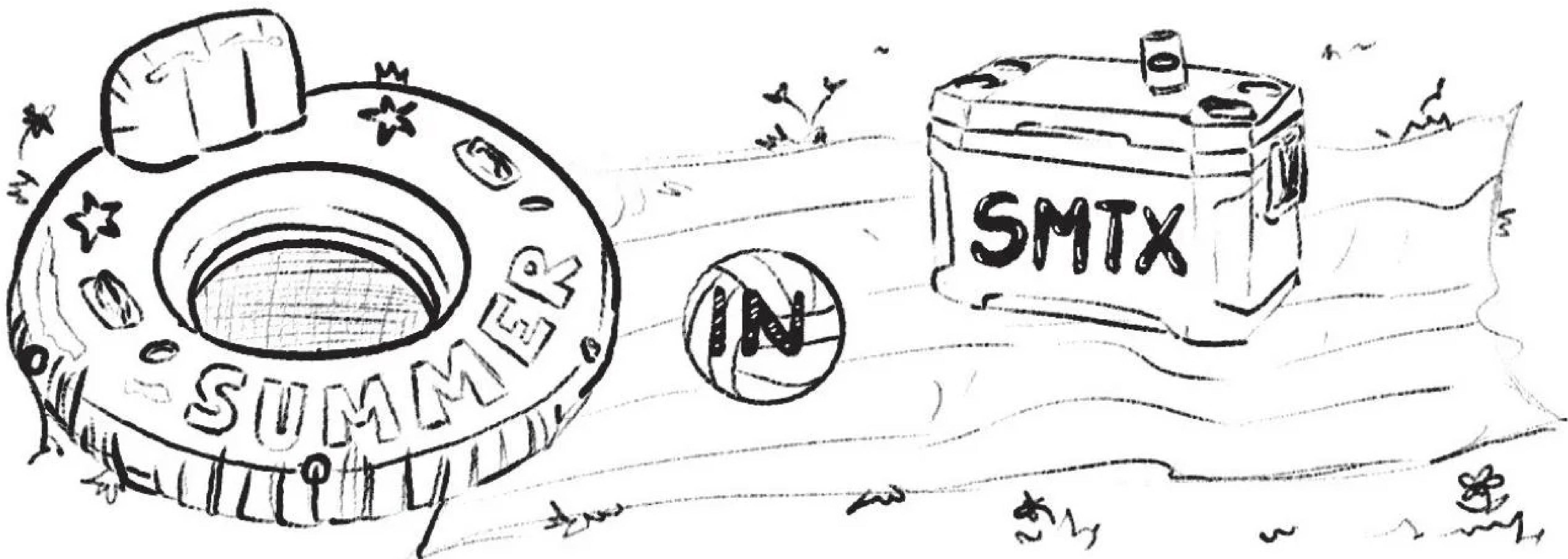
After putting up 3,657 passing yards, 35 passing touchdowns and 10 interceptions while rushing for 276 yards and eight touchdowns, McCloud earned the 2023 Sun Belt Conference Player of the Year award and was named a part of the 2023 first-team All-Sun Belt team.

Running Back Losses: Donerio Davenport played a big part in the running back room in the 2023 season, adding power in tandem with starting running back Ismail Mahdi’s speed-styled rushing attack. After rushing for 458 yards on 90 carries and 102 receiving yards on 11 receptions, Davenport transferred to Louisiana Tech.

Scan the QR code to read the remainder of the story.



Senior linebacker Brian Holloway celebrates a turnover after a pick-six versus Rice during the SERVPRO First Responder Bowl game, Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2023, in Gerald J. Ford Stadium in Dallas.



SUDOKU

Game by sudoku-solutions.com

6	9	2	5	8	4	1	7	3
3	8	5	7	2	1	9	6	4
1	7	4	6	9	3	5	8	2
7	4	1	3	5	6	2	9	8
5	2	9	4	7	8	6	3	1
8	3	6	2	1	9	7	4	5
4	1	3	9	6	5	8	2	7
9	5	7	8	3	2	4	1	6
2	6	8	1	4	7	3	5	9

Orientation Key:
Word Scramble
(1) Stairs, (2) Dorms,
(3) Bachelor, (4) Dining Hall
(5) Orientation, (6) Scholarship
Crossword
(1) Freshmen, (2) Shuttle,
(3) LBJ, (4) Bobcat,
(5) Major, (6) Emails

	1		6				8	
			8	9	3		4	
9								
							7	
			1	6	5	8		
			4					3
						7		
5		6	4			2	3	1
		8		3		9		

CROSSWORD

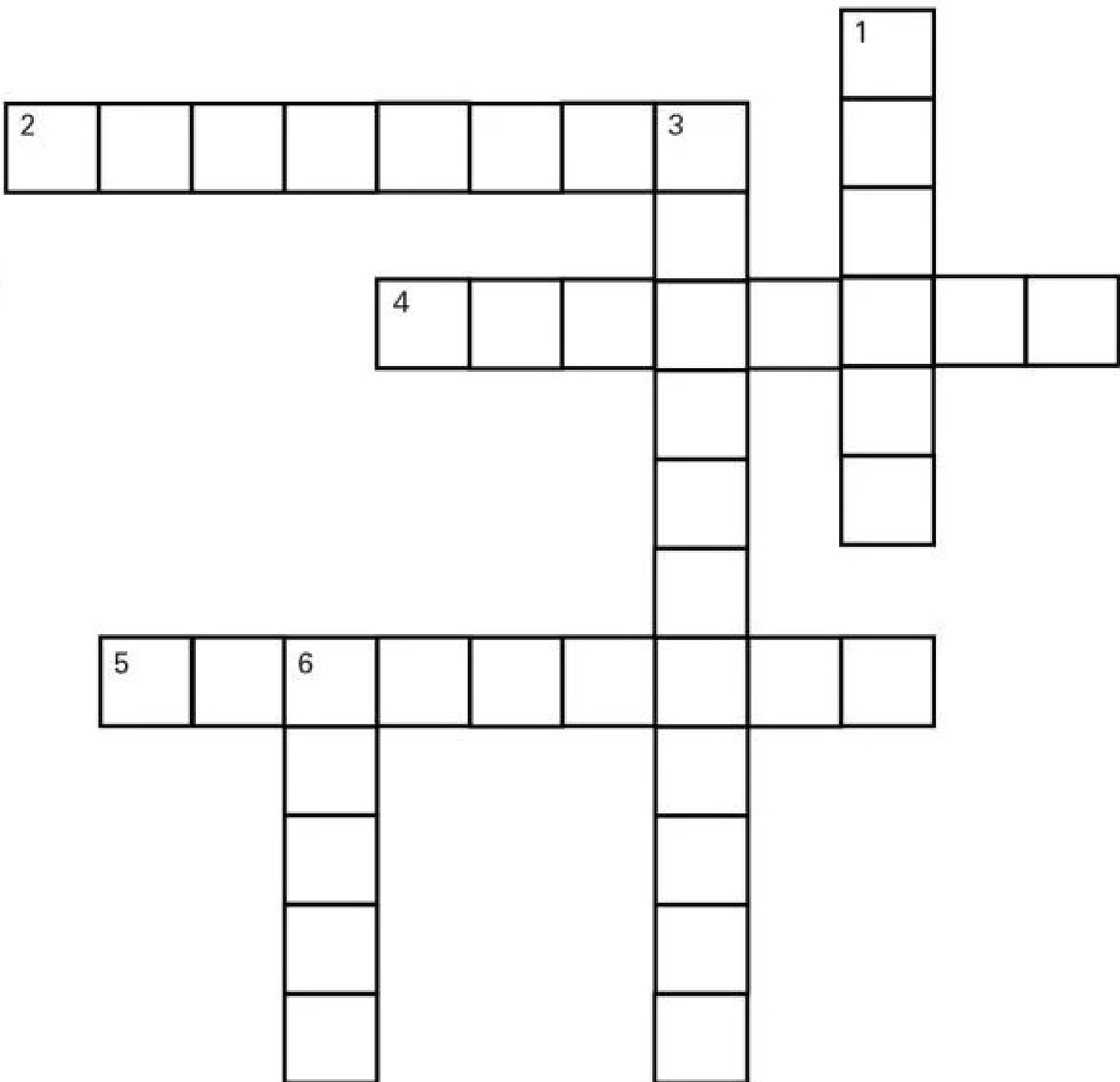
Summer Activities

ACROSS:

2. Michael Phelps is famous for competing in what olympic sport?
4. A way to travel the river in a canoe-like boat.
5. The popular creek that shares a name with a biblical in-between place.

DOWN:

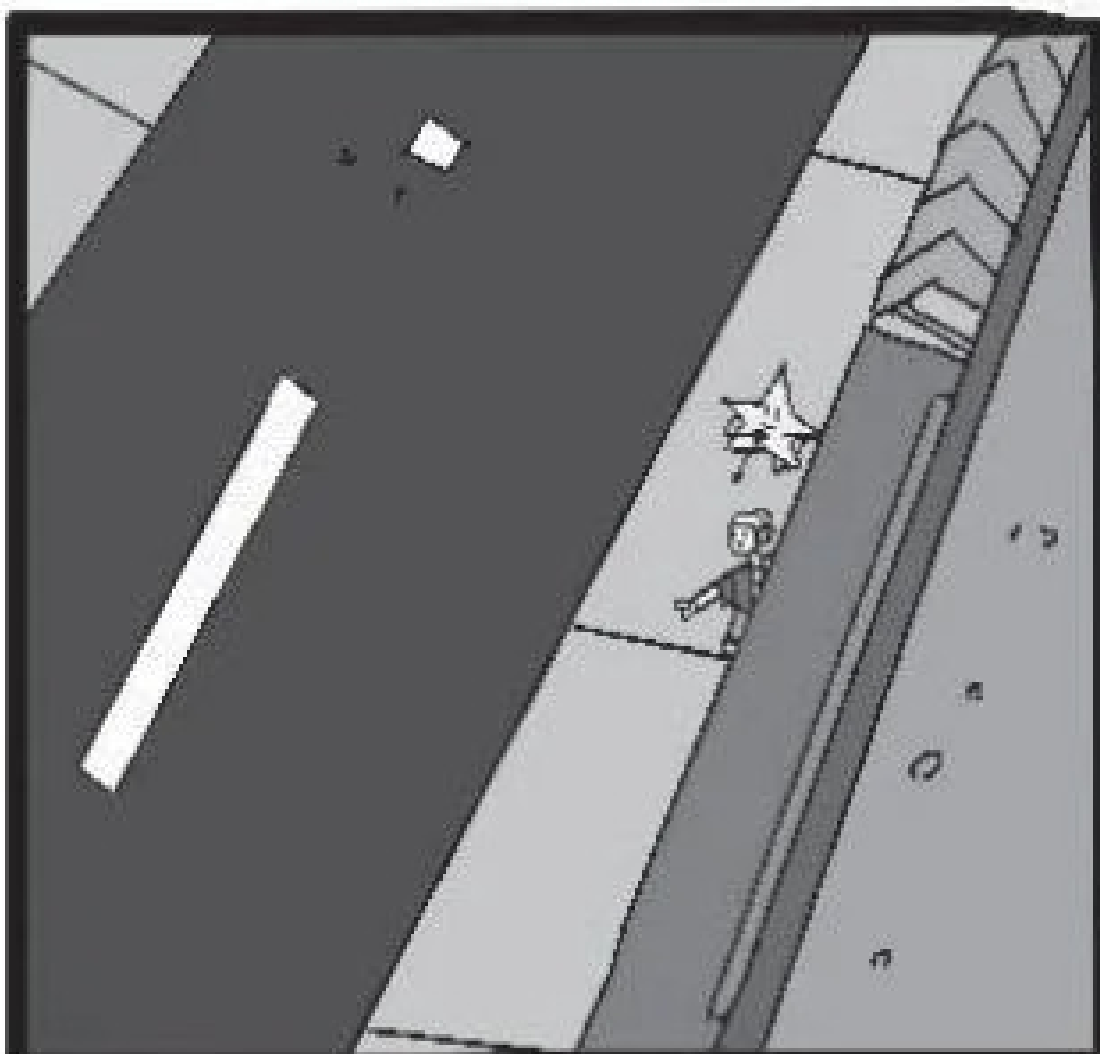
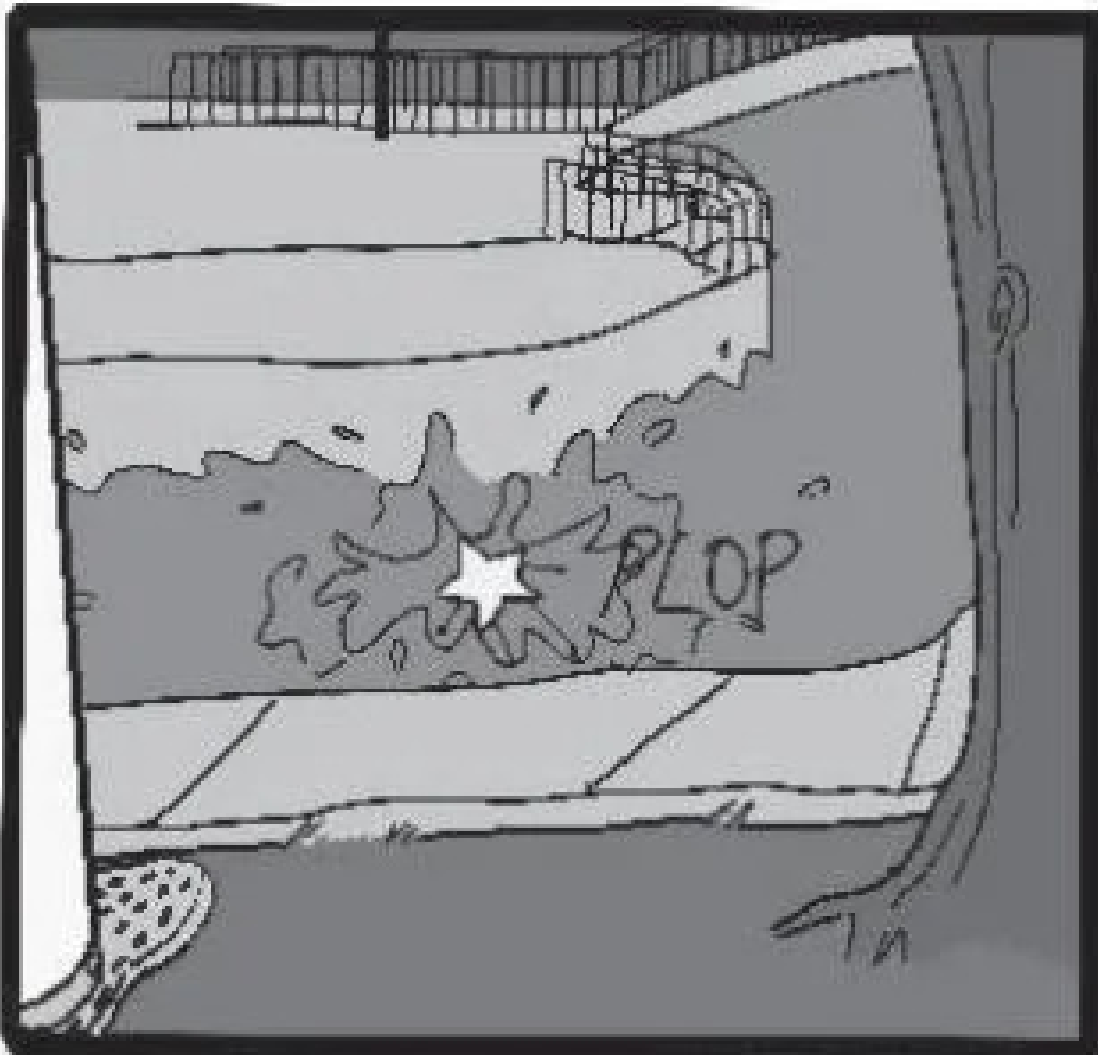
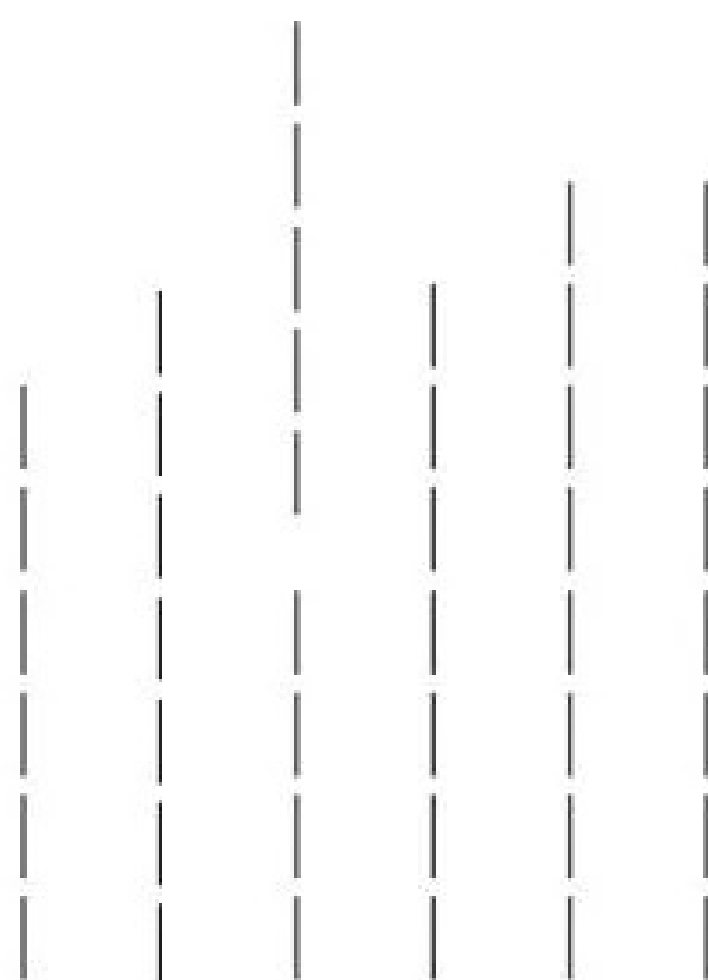
1. A shop that sells secondhand goods.
3. Boat tours that you can see through.
6. The natural winding waterway people float on.



WORD SCRAMBLE

Summer Activities

- VAITRI
- KRAKOE A
- EILV UCISM
- LEXORPE
- AGALETTI
- EBECRUBA



The Square: A cornerstone of SMTX entertainment

By Adriana Villanueva
Life and Arts Reporter

The Square is home to some of the most unique and diverse bars in town, most of which have been there for decades. Each establishment boasts a unique story of how it climbed a ladder of popularity, weaving a history of bar culture reflecting the city’s ever-evolving soul.

Since opening in 2018, Freddy C’s Lounge has established itself as a cornerstone of San Marcos’ vibrant nightlife, blending classic and cozy vibes.

“The lounge has always been old school,” Jamie Frailicks, owner of Freddy C’s Lounge said. “[It’s] not a sports bar, but we always have a sports game. [It’s] not a club but more like a comfortable place to sit and relax.”

As the nightlife scene in San Marcos continues to evolve, Frailicks believes the lounge has also continued to grow with the ever-changing bar scene.

“San Marcos and the university has grown immensely over the years, with that the crowds grow and so we that brings in a lot of traffic,” Frailicks said. “We have a lot of student staff, so we try to keep up with popular drinks patrons like as well as still trying to evolve with the new bar scene.”

Sophie and Jana Gallegos, two sisters and local community members, enjoy the vibrant bar culture on the Square. Their preferred bar atmospheres paint a picture of the Square’s versatility.

The Taproom, is known for its impressive beer selection and burgers, making it a favorite among locals and students. The Porch offers a relaxed atmosphere with live music, creating an inviting space to unwind with friends. Meanwhile, the Black Rabbit Saloon provides unique, funky vibes with expertly crafted cocktails, perfect for patrons.

Shade Rooftop Patio Bar offers a different experience with its stunning views of San Marcos, perfect for enjoying a drink while watching the sunset. Zelicks Icehouse, housed in a converted gas station, is celebrated for its laid back atmosphere and welcoming outdoor sitting. Mayloo’s adds to the eclectic mix with its high energy vibes, a perfect



Freddy C’s Lounge and Patio Bar sits at the corner of the square on East Hopkins Street, Sunday, July 7, 2024, in downtown San Marcos.

spot for a night out on the Square.

For Sophie, The Black Rabbit Saloon holds a special charm to it, due to excellent customer service and the atmosphere of the bar itself.

“Not only is the staff there super nice but the bar is very chill, with many different aspects to it,” Sophie said. “You can either just sit and drink at the bar or go to the back of the bar to place some of the games they have there.”

Sophie also frequents two other bars that exemplify the Square’s bar culture for her. Chimy’s offers a relaxed atmosphere with budget friendly drinks, perfect for kicking back and catching up.

In contrast, The Vault boasts a high-energy vibe, ideal for letting loose and dancing the night away — Sophie’s preferred way to end an evening out.

“The Vault is always the place I go to if I feel like dancing,” Sophie said. “At The Vault,

everyone is dancing, so you don’t feel like people are watching you.”

On the other hand, Jana enjoys going to Cats Billiards for a laid-back start to an evening out.

“I like going to Cats because we can play pool or just sit and chat over a good beer and after nice game,” Jana said.




Beside The Vault, which is Sophie’s favorite high-energy bar, Jana believes Axis is where the majority of people go to let loose, have a great time and experience the infectious energy that defines a night on the Square.

“One of the most popular go-to bars is the Axis, and if you are confident enough, you can do karaoke there as well,” Jana said. “It’s a lot of fun to see people sing and just have a good time.”

SPF 30+ WATERPROOF SUNSCREEN.





BRING ROPE TO TIE TUBES TOGETHER.

WEAR HATS OR GLASSES THAT YOU DONT MIND LOSING.




DON'T LITTER!

THE RIVER IS HOME TO ENDANGERED SPECIES



* PULLING WILD RICE IS AGAINST THE LAW



DO NOT BRING GLASS, CANS OR STYROFOAM.

* IT IS STATE LAW

INFOGRAPHIC BY DEVON CREW

FROM FRONT CONSERVATION



Volunteer Pat Hyde picks up trash, Sunday July 7, 2024, at Rio Vista Park.

In 2019, the Eyes acquired an education and outreach coordinator, David Zambrano, who has amplified the group’s presence. Every Monday from 6:30 to 8:30 a.m., Zambrano hosts weekly cleanups in Rio Vista Park — one of the river’s hotspots.

“It is a completely volunteer-based, non-profit organization,” Zambrano said. “No one has any paid capacity for this. It’s people who want to get out and do the right thing.”

Melani Howard, longtime resident and San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance member, joined the Eyes after meeting

Zambrano at a festival. Recently retired from working with the city, Howard felt joining the group would be a great way to continue making an impact on the community.

“They’re a great bunch of volunteers,” Howard said. “They don’t have to do any of this and here they are, and I’m surprised how many people are here at 6:30 a.m.”

According to Zambrano, while Monday morning cleanups are and will continue to be a staple for the Eyes, developments during COVID-19 contributed to its growth

and success over the years. It was during this time the Eyes encouraged the “adopt-a-spot” method for individuals as a response to limitations of contact.

Now, many members continue to operate off a ‘just-do-it-on-your-own-time’ model. They clean the river where they are with what resources they have and at times that are convenient for their schedules.

While the Eyes operates under a formula that enjoys sustainability, the group is not without its challenges. Several members share their successes and frustrations with the group on social media. One post displayed photos of empty Modelo cans littering Rio Vista Park’s limestone rocks. Deflated tubes, forlorn flip flops and other abandoned items lay strewn along the sides of the river.

“I’ve always operated on a ‘leave no trace’ principle or ‘leave something better than you found it,’ so I’m doing my best to instill that into other people,” Mary O’Hara, an Eyes volunteer, said. “Some don’t listen. It’s discouraging, but someone has to do it. Otherwise, the river suffers.”

At times, frustration with pollution runs so high members are tempted to take more of a guerrilla approach, Zambrano said. A member

once suggested trashing the steps of City Hall to get their point across. However, Zambrano understands the importance of maintaining the group’s reputation.

“It’s always frustrating to see mess left behind, but we can’t let it hurt the reputation of the group or other organizations,” Zambrano said. “Sometimes we collaborate, and we can’t have it affect anyone.”

Despite these ever-present challenges, the Eyes’ mission to preserve the river — which it shares with other organizations such as the San Marcos River Foundation, the Meadows Center and the Keep San Marcos Beautiful initiative — remains in its scope.

For more information on The Eyes of the San Marcos River, scan the QR code



“He was an icon”: San Marcos remembers local bird

By Carlene Ottah
Life and Arts Editor

Jay Cody, a former San Marcos City Cemetery sexton, met with a few friends for a function to celebrate his retirement in 2022. While talking about Cody’s work, the question came up of whether Pete the Peacock, the lone peacock that resided in the cemetery, were to die.

“If [Pete’s passing] ever happened, I hope that people will let me know that this has happened,” Cody said.

This May, Cody received calls and articles from several people saying Pete died.

While Cody could not attend Pete’s celebration of life due to distance, many San Marcos residents participated in the service. The celebration of life took place at 9:30 a.m. on June 22 at the San Marcos City Cemetery Chapel, where Pete would often take refuge from the rain, storm or heat.

The memorial service presented a poem about Pete written by a Crockett Elementary School student and displayed a miniature of the bronze headstone for his gravesite. It ended with attendees, some adorned in peacock-related attire, sharing their favorite stories of the peacock with one another.

Christie Murillo, the Parks and Recreation marketing and outreach coordinator, said she hoped the service would bring the community together for something unique to San Marcos.

“It just feels good our community can come together over something positive with what their shared love for the peacock that nobody really knows where he came from, [or] when he appeared exactly in the cemetery,” Murillo said.

According to a Facebook post from Wonder World Cave & Adventure, Phyllis Brace, the park owner’s grandmother, fed the peacocks as she

lived near the park. After Brace died in 2006, Pete followed her from the park to her resting place in the San Marcos City Cemetery.

Pete lived in the cemetery, rarely leaving the area with the chapel. He roosted in the branches of a giant live oak tree every night. However, he faced some troubles during his residence.

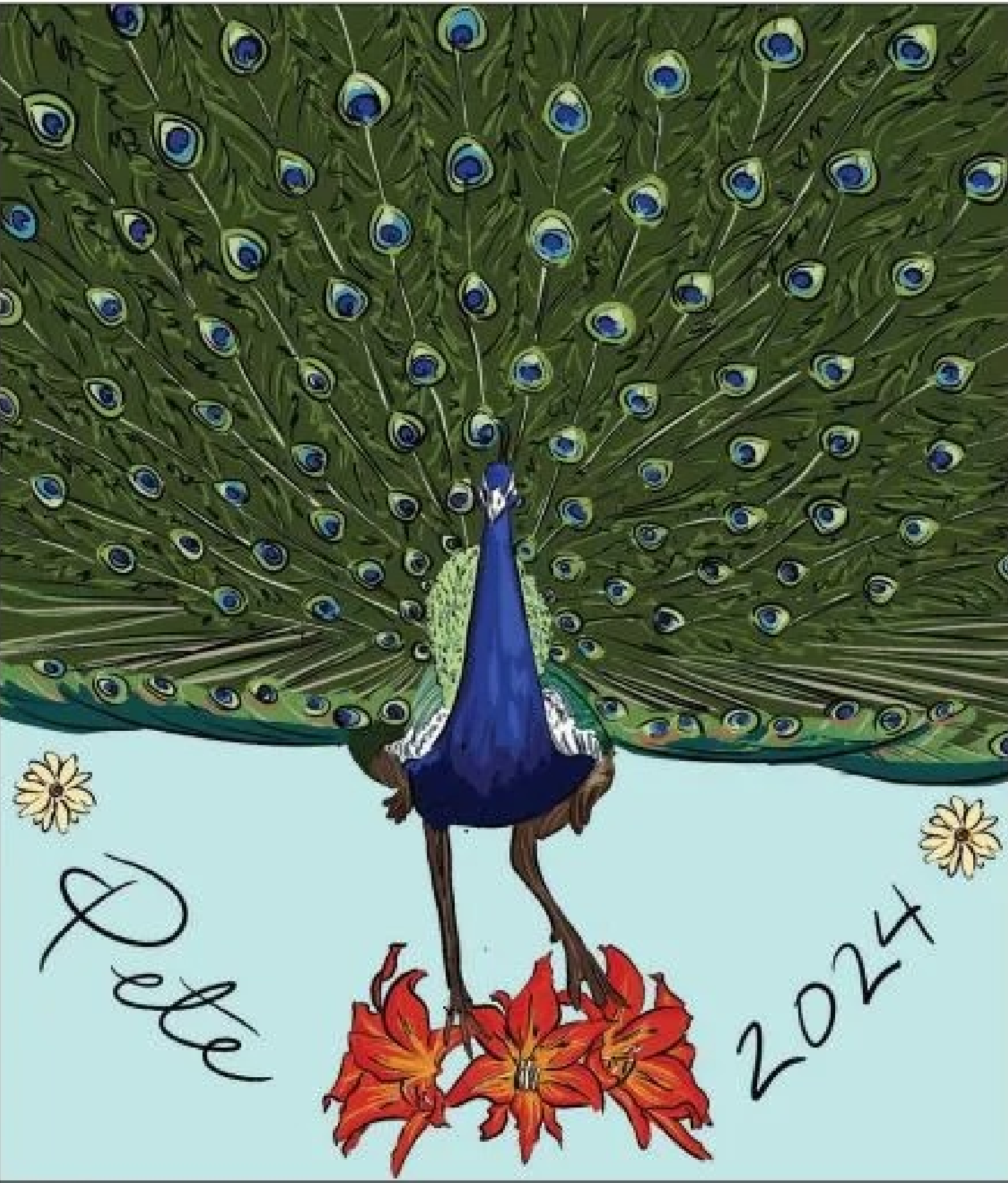


ILLUSTRATION BY JEN NGUYEN

In February 2019, Cody was concerned about Pete being in the cold in the temperature dropped to the single digits for two consecutive days. When Pete saw Cody checking on him in the morning, he flew out of his roost. Even though Cody brought him food, he said Pete “couldn’t care less” as he put out his wings and warmed up near a headstone, where the snow melted for a while.

“Pete’s a survivor — that’s what I always tell people,” Cody said. “He survived a lot of inclement weather, and then oftentimes dogs would chase him, and somehow he always made it.”

The San Marcos community often cared for Pete and looked out for him. Whenever they saw him, people would bring him water and food such as peanuts, popcorn and cat food. One woman would even bring Pete scrambled eggs she baked every day.

People around the neighborhood would bring their families and children to the cemetery to look for Pete. Cody recalls that whenever people could not find Pete, they would come to him to ask, “Where’s Pete?” or “How’s Pete?”

On the night of May 25, a young woman walking around the cemetery found Pete’s body. The following morning, she reported it to Scott McLelland, the San Marcos City Cemetery sexton. McLelland would receive more calls afterward from people who also walked by.

“[Hearing those calls and receiving the news] was heartbreaking,” McLelland said. “He was an icon. It’s quieter and lonelier without him at times. It was sad.”

On May 28, McLelland informed Murillo of Pete’s death. The same day, she created the post on SMTX Parks and Recreation. Many people shared their memories of Pete through photos, videos and stories. Murillo said that even knowing how familiar the San Marcos community was with Pete, the department was surprised by the reaction.

“We all felt the connection with them, and we all felt sad about what’s happening, but then to know that so many other people were sad about it too was like, ‘oh man, he was even more famous than what we thought,’” Murillo said.

BEAT THE HEAT

STAY HYDRATED

Signs of heat-related illnesses:
A temperature above 103°F
Red skin
Rapid pulse
Headache
Dizziness
Nausea
Confusion
Cramps
Tiredness
Unconsciousness



Wear waterproof sunscreen (SPF 30 or above) and reapply throughout the day.



Keep blinds, curtains and doors closed to keep in cool air.

Stay indoors and in an air-conditioned place, if possible.



Information from: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, American Red Cross and American Academy of Dermatology Association

INFOGRAPHIC BY ABBY FUNDERBURK



PHOTO BY MANDALYN LEWALLEN

A group of friends float down the river, Thursday, July 4, 2024, at Sewell Park.



PHOTO BY MANDALYN LEWALLEN

San Marcos holds a firework show in celebration of Independence Day, Thursday, July 4, 2024, in the UFCU Stadium parking lot.



PHOTO BY LUCAS KRAFT

Children receive a face painting during the family picnic, Thursday, July 4, 2024, at the Meadows Center Glass Bottom Boat Tours.



PHOTO BY MANDALYN LEWALLEN

San Marcos locals sit in front of the University Events Center to watch the firework show, Thursday, July 4, 2024.



PHOTO BY LUCAS KRAFT

Children learn how to make tissue paper sparklers during the family fun picnic, Thursday, July 4, 2024, at The Meadows Center Glass Bottom Boat Tours.



PHOTO BY MANDALYN LEWALLEN

San Marcos locals take a break from rafting and paddle boarding down the river, Monday, July 1, 2024, at Sewell Park.



PHOTO BY MANDALYN LEWALLEN

San Marcos locals make a splash on the river on a hot summer day, Monday, July 1, 2024, at Sewell Park.



ILLUSTRATION BY DJ ROSS